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February 22, 2005

National Organic Standards Board
c/o National Organic Program
Washington, DC

Dear Board Members,

Thank you for your valuable work and your dedication to furthering the cause of organic agriculture.

I wish to acquaint the Board with some work that the National Center for Appropriate Technology is doing for the National Organic Program. Late last year we obtained an NOP contract to develop a number of materials for the Program. As many of you know, we've worked with the Program before and developed a pair of organic workbooks to assist transitioning farmers, several sets of documentation forms, and a compliance checklist for producers. All of these are currently available through the ATTRA Project which we also manage.

The current contract focuses mostly on tools for improving the quality of organic system plans submitted by producers to their certifiers. We're calling it the OSP (Organic System Plan) Project for short. The contract is for \$40,000 and has an end date for all deliverables in the Fall of 2006.

The specific tasks and deliverables for the OSP Project include:

- 1) Upgrading the current Cropping System Plan Template. This document is featured in its current form on the ATTRA website at: <http://www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/handlingsys.pdf>. It has been vetted by the NOSB in the past. We propose only minor changes in language to make it read more like the planning document it is intended to be, and less like a documentation form. We also intend to incorporate elements proposed by Wild Farm Alliance at the last NOSB meeting, which serve to promote biodiversity. Actually, this was not a stated deliverable in our original contract, but it is turning out to be an essential step in the development of deliverable #2.
- 2) Developing a livestock system template. This template will be consistent with the upgraded cropping system template. At the present time, no vetted template is in common use among certifiers.
- 3) An Organic System Plan Workbook. Upon completion of the templates, we will develop a workbook to serve as a guide to farmers in completing system plans. It

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will suggest language, provide guidance in gray areas, and encourage sustainable practices.

- 4) Finally, we have also committed to the development of a Handler Checklist that will be modeled on the Compliance Checklist for Producers, which is on the website at: <http://www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/compliance.pdf>.

We have a stakeholder team of about 25 folks assembled to review and guide the development of these products. The team includes Certifier representatives, farmers, and others from the organic community. It also includes several members of the NOP staff and Jim Riddle as representative from the NOSB.

If there are any questions or concerns, please contact me at 479-442-9824 or georgek@ncat.org.

Thanks for your time and attention.

George Kuepper
NCAT Program Specialist